Irish Independent

IRELAND'S BEST-SELLING DAILY NEWSPAPER

SCHOOLS RUGBY

FREE INSIDE - YOUR ULTIMATE 8-PAGE GUIDE

WWW.INDEPENDENT.IE Wednesday 16 January 2008 €1.70 (75p in N. IRELAND)

Amy, come home begs sad brother in letter

Brendan Farrelly

THE brother of missing teen Amy Fitzpatrick has written her a heart-rending letter.

Dean (17), pictured on the right, tells in the letter, on top, how his mother is crying all the time and begs his 15-year-old sister to please come home.

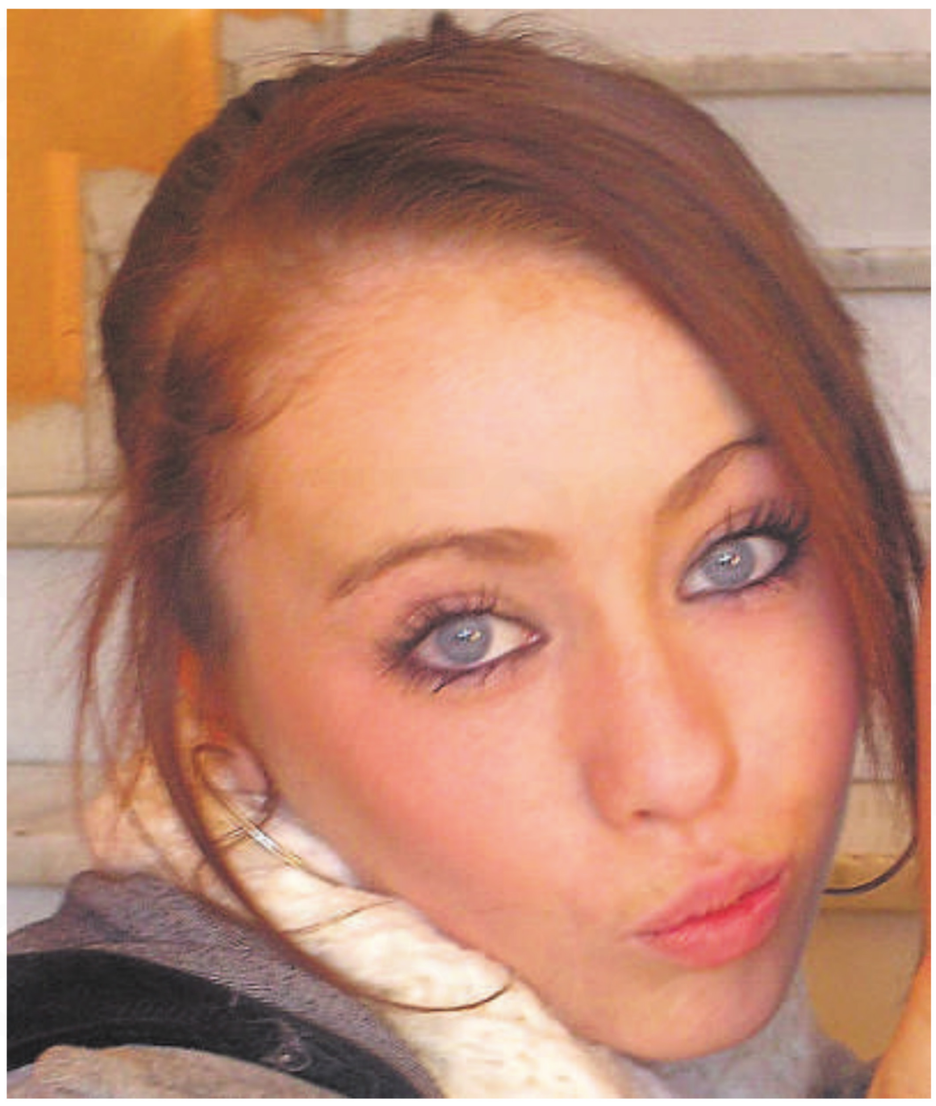
"I don't know if you ran away, but if you have just give us a text or something," he said.

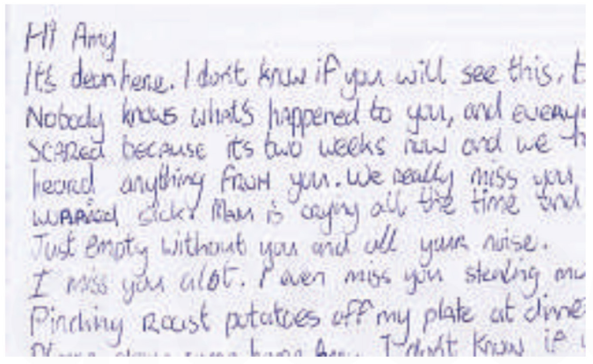
And he speaks of how everybody is really scared as the mystery drags on.

No trace has been found of Amy since she disappeared from the town of Mijas on the Costa del Sol on January 1.

Dean wrote: "I don't know if you will see this, but I hope so."

MUM CRIES A LOT: PAGE 3





INSIDE

NICOLA ANDERSON
An unfolding tragedy **P4&5**

DAVID MCWILLIAMS
Our wealth and poverty trap **P29**

SPORT
How we square up for the World Cup

Robert's killer – I won't run and hide

O'Donoghue to brave full media glare on release today

Ralph Riegel

THE killer of slain schoolboy Robert Holohan has promised to walk directly into the glare of an unprecedented media frenzy when he takes his first steps to freedom today.

Wayne O'Donoghue will be greeted by an intense scrum of waiting reporters, photographers and onlookers as he walks free from the Midlands Prison in Portlaoise to begin an uncertain new life.

However, the 23-year-old has said he will not leave the prison in disguise.

And he dismissed claims he has been given a new identity by the State to allow him to begin a new life abroad.

In an interview with the *Irish Independent*, O'Donoghue's solicitor Frank Buttimer said: "He will come out of prison like any other citizen who has served his time and who wants to face up to the reality of their future life."

Mr Buttimer repeated his view that it will be very tough for his client to remain in Ireland.

But he hinted O'Donoghue, despite the "absolutely unprecedented" and "extraordinary set of circumstances" surrounding his release, could opt to remain in Ireland if he is allowed to live a normal life here.

"I do believe it will be difficult for Wayne to live in this country because of the circum-

Continued on page 10

O'Donoghue: free today

Recommended retail price of the Irish Independent compact edition in ROI is €1.70

Vol. 117 No. 13 Irish Independent

INSIDE ● A town awaits another painful reminder PAGE 10

Harney to consider private care for CF patients

Eilish O'Regan

HEALTH Minister Mary Harney said yesterday she would consider calls to contract private hospital beds for cystic fibrosis patients – but warned it may not be possible.

She said she was open to any idea which would benefit patients but the use of the Beacon Hospital in Dublin would be a clinical decision for doctors.

She was responding to calls from Independent TD Finian McGrath to put some interim measures in place to relieve the crisis faced by cystic fibrosis patients in St Vincent's Hospital where they lack private facilities and are in danger of infection.

"Clinical staff are employed in St Vincent's and Beaumont Hospitals and we are paying for those clinical staff.

"Whether it is possible to combine the clinical expertise available in St Vincent's with the Beacon I am not certain.

"As Minister for Health and Children I am willing to look at any suggestions that might benefit patients," she added.

New facilities which would allow many of the cystic fibrosis patients to avail of single rooms will be built at St Vincent's Hospital later this year as part of a capital plan extending to 2013.

Several cystic fibrosis patients have spoken out about the conditions they have to endure which leaves them open to potentially fatal infections.

Mrs Harney added: "About 55pc of the 1100 sufferers are children and since I became Minister it was a priority of mine to improve their services.

"We provided over €9m since 2005 and that is not an inconsiderable sum of money."

She said the preference of management at St Vincent's was to have the new cystic fibrosis facilities built as part of an overall development plan.

"It would have been my wish for the cystic fibrosis facility to proceed first but the hospital felt the 120-bed unit should not be built as a single and stand-alone facility".

She said €2.5m has been provided this year towards enhancing the facilities at Beaumont Hospital.

"We should put this in context.

"There have been huge improvements in this area but clearly there is room for more improvement," she added.

400 languish on trolleys as A&E crisis hits new peak

Tallaght, Beaumont worst affected

Eilish O'Regan
Health Correspondent

THE number of patients on A&E trolleys yesterday soared to nearly 400 – the highest level so far this winter.

Figures from the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) revealed the worst hit was Tallaght Hospital in Dublin, where as many as 50 patients were waiting on trolleys yesterday morning.

Other Dublin blackspots included Beaumont Hospital where 38 patients were facing delays and the Mater, where another 36 were crowded into the emergency department.

The total number of 397 patients on trolleys and chairs was as bad as the early months of 2006 when the A&E overcrowding was deemed a national crisis by Health Minister Mary Harney.

Outside Dublin, the hospitals with the worst overcrowding were University College Hospital Galway (27), Cork University Hospital (25) and Our Lady of Lourdes in Drogheda (23).

Letterkenny General Hospital, Roscommon County Hospital and Sligo General were also struggling to cope with patients, many of whom were in need of a hospital bed.

The situation comes in the wake of an admission by the Health Service Executive (HSE) that months of cutbacks were partly to blame for the crisis.

Fine Gael spokesman on health Dr James Reilly said: "We are firmly back in the territory of March 2006 when the minister described A&E as a 'national emergency'.

"The minister's failure to provide long-promised community beds is at the root of the problem as, in Beaumont and the Mater alone, approximately 57,000 bed-days were lost last year due to delayed discharges. This is the equivalent of a 150-bed hospital."

He insisted there is no doubt that "misguided cutbacks, imposed with the minister's sanction in the last four months of 2007, have played a part in adding to the problems now.

"In particular, budget cuts which saw patients refused discharge from acute beds to community facilities or supported at home with home-care packages were a false economy."

He said he was appealing to the minister to instruct the HSE to fund the discharges of patients who no longer require acute care to appropriate settings so that desperately needed acute beds can be released without delay.

Patients facing seven-month delay for CT scan

PATIENTS referred for a CT scan at Tallaght Hospital in Dublin are facing delays of seven months, it emerged yesterday.

The hospital is having to cope with a 10-year-old scanning machine and will not be able to replace it until later this year.

CT scanning offers detailed views of different tissue types, including lungs, bones, soft tissues and blood vessels.

It can also be used to examine the brain for suspected tumours, bleeding, or swelling of the arteries.

A spokesperson for the hospital confirmed yesterday that a patient referred for a scan at the hospital now would not be examined until July.

However, she said if a case was discussed with the radiologist and deemed urgent it would be given priority.

The hospital denied that it was given funding to buy a new CT scanner in 2006 by the Health Service Executive (HSE) but failed to do so.

"We did apply for a 64-Slice CT scanner in 2006. Funding for the scanner was not spent because we did not receive funding," said the spokesperson.

She said the hospital was now in the middle of tendering for a CT scanner. The hospital was confident it would receive confirmation from the HSE for the new scanner, which would allow it to be put in place later this year.

Health Minister Mary Harney yesterday said she could not comment on claims that the hospital received funding for the scanning machine but did not spend it.

"I don't know the specifics of why it was not purchased," she said.

EILISH O'REGAN

Frank Rice and Frank Rafferty of Hibernian Healthcare demonstrate a medical technique as Health Minister Mary Harney looks on during the launch of the IRFU's new first aid programme yesterday and (inset) the life-saving defibrillator which will be used in the training. DAMIEN EAGERS

Rugby first-aid training to tackle threat of sudden cardiac death

Eilish O'Regan

A NEW drive is to get under way in rugby clubs and schools to reduce the risk of sudden cardiac death, the Irish Rugby Football Union announced yesterday.

The sporting body is to roll out first-aid training, and teach at least six people in each club or school how to use a defibrillator – a machine that can save the life of someone suffering sudden cardiac arrest.

Launching the programme, Health Minister Mary Harney said the proposed training was in line with recommendations by a task force on sudden cardiac death.

The group was set up following the deaths of young sportsmen, including Tyrone footballer Cormac McAnallen.

"If someone has access to a defibrillator within five minutes after suffering cardiac arrest they have a 50pc chance of recovery," Ms Harney said.

However, it is not possible to make defibrillators compulsory everywhere.

"In time, maybe 20 years from now, there may be a defibrillator in every home in the country," she added.

The programme will be accredited by the Irish Heart Foundation and will also feature general injury training.

Those who want to avail of the service should contact their local provincial domestic game manager or the IRFU directly for details.

No need to argue . . . about Dolores's success

Richie Taylor

SHE might not have a record contract, but Dolores O'Riordan is still making music and winning awards.

It may not be a Grammy, but the former Cranberries singer is to get a major international award for her album 'Are You Listening?' from the European Commission and members of the European music industry.

The star will perform in front of the world's top music business people at this month's MIDEM convention in Cannes in the south of France.

It is the fifth year of the awards, known internationally as the EBBAs (the European Border Breakers Awards).

English act The Fratellis and other European artists are also being honoured. Dolores will be performing live on January 27.

"She's absolutely delighted. It's a great opportunity for her and a great honour. Her album has actually sold nearly 600,000 copies to date.

"She went out with a new band and toured it all across Europe and America, which boosted sales," said a spokeswoman.

While not many music fans have heard of the EBBAs, it is a major event for the international music business community.

Ironically, the singer is currently without a contract as her previous record company Sanctuary no longer exists.

It was taken over by music giant Universal, but Dolores has no contract at all with them.

The Limerick-born singer, whose hits with The Cranberries included the singles 'Linger', No Need to Argue' and 'Zombie', is bound to receive plenty of offers from record company bosses at MIDEM if she is in the marketplace for a new deal. Dolores is currently recording new material in a studio abroad. But reports of The Cranberries getting back together to record and tour are wide of the mark.

"They stay in touch and talk all the time, but there are no plans for them to reform at the moment. The only recording that Dolores is doing is for her own projects. All of them are busy and are involved in different musical projects," added the source.

The EBBAs are based on the release of an original debut album, EU sales and success of tours outside an artist's home state.

Dolores O'Riordan may not have the same exposure as she had at the peak of her fame with the Cranberries (right), but the Limerick singer is still recording and touring and has just been given a major international award.

SUVs driving up emissions

EPA warns of 'worrying' rise in pollution

Treacy Hogan
Environment Correspondent

A MASSIVE rise in the numbers buying gas-guzzling SUVs, big cars and supertrucks has led to a "worrying" increase in emissions from transport, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revealed yesterday.

The authority also warned that the Government's target of a 3pc annual reduction in climate-changing emissions over the next five years would be "extremely challenging".

The rise of exhaust emissions was by far the largest in any sector in 2006 and it reflected a 165pc increase on 1990 figures.

Transport emissions made up almost 20pc of the 2006 total – the vast majority of which (97pc) was generated by road transport.

There was a rise of almost 680,000 tonnes of carbon from car and truck exhausts, according to the EPA report.

"The increase reflects increasing vehicle numbers, a trend towards purchasing larger vehicles, an increased reliance on private cars and increasing road freight transport," said the EPA.

Ireland's emissions are now running at 25.5pc more than 1990 levels, even though we are only allowed 13pc under Kyoto agreement.

While overall greenhouse gas emissions fell by 0.8c (570,000 tonnes), the agency warned that the growth in the transport sector posed the biggest challenge to meeting the Kyoto target.

Substantial

The substantial decrease of 4.6pc from energy generation (a decrease of almost 750,000 tonnes) was also due to the Moneypoint power plant not being in use for some time due to plant improvements. Emissions from agriculture continued to fall, showing a 1.4pc drop on 2005.

In 2006, our emissions were 69.77 million tonnes, almost seven million tonnes above the Kyoto limit.

Dr Mary Kelly, EPA director general, said that while the overall reduction of 0.8pc was encouraging, the remaining distance to our Kyoto target was substantial.

"It shows that we continue to face a very major challenge. Reducing emissions in a growing economy will require a major effort on all our parts," she added.

Dr Kelly described the transport emissions as particularly worrying and warned that major efforts would be required to halt and reverse this trend.

"Greenhouse gases emitted now will remain in the atmosphere for many decades and affect the climate for centuries to come. Policymakers must use the detailed breakdown of figures in each sector, provided today, to focus on all areas where reductions are possible and need to be achieved," she said.

Damaging

In the post-Kyoto period to 2020, emissions reductions in the order of 20 to 30pc on 1990 emissions were being proposed to avoid "irreversible and damaging climate change".

Dr Kelly said Europe was attempting to limit the inevitable global temperature increase to two degrees.

The reduction in emissions of methane and other greenhouse gases from agriculture was due to lower livestock numbers and decreased use of fertilisers.

Despite this, agriculture remains the single largest contributor to overall emissions at almost 28pc.

Brakes are put on early car sales spree

NEW-CAR sales are tapering off from their mad start-of-year rush.

But they are still marginally ahead of last year, unofficial figures show.

Up to yesterday more than 27,000 new motors had been registered. That is around 1,000 more than for the corresponding period last year. However, there has been a marked slowdown in the level of business in the past few days.

This is being blamed on two elements. The first is the dramatic telescoping of purchases into the first days of the year as buyers rush to get into their new car. Effectively that means even more people bought earlier this year.

The second is perceived to be the confusion surrounding the July 1 start-up of the new emissions regime for purchase and road taxes, and the prospect of many cars being less or more costly after that.

Road tax is undoubtedly a major issue. Under the current proposals, new cars bought now will have their road tax calculated on their engine size – for ever. From July 1, the level of road tax will be determined by emissions.

The motor industry in particular claims this is discriminating against someone buying a 'green' car now and there should be a way to allow such buyers to avail of the more beneficial emissions system when they come to renew their road tax.

EDDIE CUNNINGHAM

HOLD YOUR NERVE: MOTORS, PAGES 52 & 53